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SUBJECT: MEDIA PLAY: IRAQ

11. On 3/20 the ISLAND (opposition daily, islandwide circulation) said "there is no doubt which way the war will go," but predicted that it will not only "bring about radical changes in the politics of ... the Middle East but ... will also turn the new political order ... topsy turvy," as the "the democratic idealism that gradually came to the forefront in US foreign policy [is] ... replaced with sheer militarism and disregard for international law and the UN." The ISLAND concludes: "the world can only hope that what is happening is an aberration."

12. Block quotes:

It's all over but the shouting. George Bush and Tony Blair are marching to war but there are no delirious cries of patriotic fervour from their countrymen, no ringing assurances of support from their allies, no support from nations that have had good relations with the two warring nations and certainly very strong opposition being expressed in the Islamic world.

Paradoxically, Saddam Hussein whom the American President wants to drive out of power is by no means a person liked and loved by even a very few, save his own cohorts. The reign of terror during which he has held the Iraqi people in bondage, the unwanted wars he had brought upon the country - the over ten years of war with Iran and the invasion of Kuwait - have left the country in shambles and its people in untold misery. They have been suffering under UN imposed sanctions for over a decade. But a war is being opposed by the great majority of nations and naturally by the Iraqis. They most probably want Saddam Hussein out but not a war. This war could make Saddam Hussein, truly a Satyr, into a Martyr.

There is no doubt which way the war will go. The Daily Telegraph report from the Kuwait - Iraq border (see page 8) said the stark choices for the Iraqi soldiers in the battlefield are to: run, surrender or die fighting. The last chance for diplomacy is over. The United States, Britain and Spain on Monday announced that they were withdrawing a draft resolution submitted to the UN Security Council which authorised the automatic use of force and which was likely to be rejected by the UN. Later, President Bush in an address to the nation called upon President Saddam Hussein to leave his country within 48 hours or face war that will start 'at a time of our choosing'

This war is not only bound to bring about radical changes in the politics of Iraq and that of the Middle East but it will also turn the new political order that was taking shape after the Cold War, topsy turvy.

For over a century, western European nations and the United States have been working as allies and in close political and economic collaboration having fought two World Wars and been united for half a century in the Cold War against the Soviet Union.

Having triumphed in the Cold War, during the past decade they have been working very closely as allies, attempting to forge a new international order. Whether, it was a multi-polar world that was being forged or a uni-polar world during the past decade, there was little doubt that co-operation and understanding between the Atlantic Alliance remained unshaken. But with the advent of President Bush, there appears to have been much bulldozing in foreign policy and finally the issue of war on Iraq has rendered them apart.

America's European allies, France and Germany, particularly France, have stood firmly against a war on Iraq without the sanction of the UN Security Council. President Chirac in a very strongly worded statement on Monday said that most of the recent debates in the UN have shown that the Security Council was not prepared to, under present circumstances, to approve a precipitate march to war and that there was no justification for unilateral decision to resort to war. President Chirac in oblique ways said that the US was ignoring international law and appealed to every one to ensure the respect of international legality.

This kind of unilateral action was not possible at the time of the existence of the other superpower, the Soviet Union but even after its demise both President Bush's father and President Bill Clinton preferred multi-lateralism and sought to work through the UN. The Bush (Snr) in his war with Saddam Hussein worked in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions and was able to bring together a coalition of nations including those of Arab hardline nations such as Syria led by the late President Assad. Today, if Bush (Jnr) goes to war he will have only two other leaders - British and Spanish Prime Ministers - with him and even then there is strong opposition to the war in those countries, three cabinet ministers resigning from Tony Blair's cabinet and a 139 Labour members voting for a motion against the war.

Now that the war seems inevitable the question to be posed is: After the War, what?

What would concern the entire world is whether the democratic idealism that gradually came to the forefront in US foreign policy in the last few decades, despite emergence of Cold war presidents like Reagan, will be replaced with sheer militarism and disregard for international law and the UN. The world can only hope that what is happening is an aberration.

Wills